

vince, with the stags also and the thistles of the old country from which his ancestors had come. I suppose few of my readers have ever heard of "Sam Slick," but in my boyhood it was the first specimen we ever received on this side of the Atlantic of that strange new form of humour now called American, and I remember to this day the delight with which I read of the doings of the smart, humorous, ready, pushful Yankee who figures in its pages. The author of "Sam Slick" was not a Yankee at all, nor even a professional writer, much less a professional humorist. He was a lawyer of great distinction who, at the early age of thirty-two, was Chief Justice in his native province of Nova Scotia. The family originally came from the Border country, had a short period of life in the United States, but finally settled down again under the British flag in Nova Scotia. These immigrants were followed by a university, for when the United States achieved their independence there was no place for the Royal College—as it was called—in New York, and it was transferred to Windsor, Nova Scotia. It was there that Arthur Lawrence Haliburton, the subject of this memoir, was educated; and it was there that he imbibed those strong Conservative principles which remained with him for the rest of his life. The same thing was true of his father. When the author of "Sam Slick," with all its modernity of tone and outlook, came to England, he was returned for Launceston, and people naturally expected to find that he would bring to the Old World some of the Radical spirit of the New. As a matter of fact, he was an old-fashioned Conservative—too old even for the Conservatism of England, and his son remained of pretty much the same school.

## II.

This biography, apart from its picture of its subject, is interesting as throwing often a sidelight on those inner places in the administration of the country which the public rarely gets an opportunity of seeing. And one cannot help being now and then depressed by the revelation there is of the hopeless and incredible incompetence, for which the nation has so often to pay a heavy toll in precious money and still more precious blood. Take, for instance, the question which raged for some time in the War Office circles of the 'forties and 'fifties—namely, whether there should be a separate Commissariat Department:

In spite of all the warnings of the past and the memories of the Peninsula campaigns, a Parliamentary Committee, appointed to inquire into the Army and Ordnance expenditure had recently reported that there was no necessity for the existence of such a department in Great Britain and Ireland. It had formed its decision on the ground that the arrangements of the Commissariat Department were all based upon a state of war, "which seems to be unnecessary, inasmuch as it appears on the highest evidence that no training in time of peace will fit a commissary for his duties in the field during war."

This sapient report was paid for by the rotting and starving and frozen soldiers who filled the trenches in the Crimean War. It was a heavy price to pay for official incompetence. This crisis it was that brought Haliburton from his native Nova Scotia into the British civil service. He was appointed to the Commissariat Department which had to be improvised in the midst of the war. And from that time onward Haliburton was attached in some capacity or another to the War Office.